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ABSTRACT

Since the teaching force for the 1970s will be predominantly stable, the need of teacher education for the future is not preservice education but inservice. The primary responsibility for inservice education is with public school educators. But this is in no way a disclaimer that other agencies have responsibility. Traditional methods, such as a college course for credit, are no longer viable for the problems of today. College courses can still be an effective means for inservice education, but the design and implementation of these courses needs modification. Instead of a "prepackaged" block, the course should be designed with attention to unique characteristics of schools/systems. Should the school be concerned with moving to a highly individualized instructional program, a college course should be composed of elements which would support and guide the particular faculty as they move into this particular curricular change. Flexibility, courses planned cooperatively with the target personnel, classes held in schools rather than on a college campus, and the collaborative efforts of several professors as well as public school personnel should all be components of inservice education. (JA)

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Inservice Education:
New Directions for Colleges of Education

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Inservice Education: New Directions for Colleges of Education

The call for inservice education is the most urgent and demanding of the pressures exerted upon the education profession today. To be viable, inservice education programs must achieve two inextricably interwoven objectives: immediate aid for professionals and eventual benefits for students whom they affect.

Questions arise as one contemplates these words:

1. Why is the need so crucial at this time?
2. Who is responsible for inservice education?
3. What are the implications of the two objectives?
4. How can the need for inservice education be met?

Need for immediate action

As noted by Harold Howe, "recent estimates indicate that 75 percent of the teaching force will be stable in the 1970s, with the balance in constant change. It is thus more important than ever to enhance the quality and reach of inservice training."¹ In support of this contention, Donald J. McCarty has noted that "most individuals who will be teaching for the next twenty years are now in place. The need for the future, therefore, will be for inservice education of practitioners, not preservice education."²

Both Silberman³ and Howe⁴ contend that it is impossible for an individual to learn all that he needs to know for a career in education in a professional school. To further compound the problem, today "schools are experiencing an alleged shortage of classroom learning" while the budget crunch causes superintendents to seek to employ the cheapest credentialed teachers.⁵ Thus the need for inservice education is obvious. Professional educators have an obligation to meet the need; failure to seek and find viable methods is inexcusable.

Responsibility for Inservice Education

No arm of professional education can ignore its responsibility in the area of inservice education. The obligation belongs, then, to educators in public schools, universities, state departments of education, and professional organizations.

There are those who place the primary responsibility for inservice education with public school educators. The rationale for this is well stated by L.L. Cunningham:

Most schools' problems are at the building level. It is there where teachers confront the complexities that threaten and overwhelm. It is there where poor motivation resides... It is there where the limitation of a poorly prepared instructional staff is most telling. It is there where curriculum reform is paramount. It is there where youngsters arrive every day with mixed expectations in regard to their educational fortunes. It is there where diagnostic and prescriptive capabilities are most needed. It is there where supporting services should come to rest.

For these reasons, each school faculty, building-level administration, student body, and parent community should have primary responsibility for defining how they can strengthen themselves. They are privileged to know their problems best. They live with them every day.⁶

That professional educators in public schools have an obligation in the area of inservice education is no way a disclaimer that other agencies have responsibility. Certainly the institutions of higher education are called upon today as never before to work with public school systems to devise and implement programs which will provide the kind of assistance needed and wanted. Indeed, what is needed is an alliance of professional educators in the various agencies/institutions. The too-prevalent separatism serves as a fragmenting element in what should be a vigorous and cohesive effort.

Implications of the Objectives

To say that inservice education should provide immediate aid to professionals and subsequent benefit to their students sounds a clear call for options for educators. No longer will the perennial programs on the same topic every year suffice; no longer will token inservice efforts be acceptable. The critical

issues of education must be met in such a manner that even the most complex problems are addressed with the classroom problems encountered every day by teachers and principals forming the foundation of inservice programs.

Inspirational addresses have a place but do not provide alternative methods for teachers and principals coping with problems of motivation, classroom management, widely divergent student bodies, drug abuse, emotionally and economically deprived students, new subject matter, etc.

It is only when inservice education has a potential for benefiting students that the needs of teachers will be met. Thus, the time is at hand when educators in public schools and institutions of higher education must sit down together.

Alternative Methods

Traditional methods are no longer adequate for the problems of today. In the past, taking a college course for credit has been a widely accepted/utilized means for public school personnel to meet school system requirements and personal desires for inservice professional development. However, the day has passed when colleges could "package" a course, announce its availability at an extension center, and satisfy the needs of public school personnel.

The schools of today pose new challenges that necessitate a variety of approaches on the part of educators. Cognizance of the unique character of school/system problems is essential if college inservice courses are to be of real value to faculty members. Otherwise, it may be justifiably said that inservice sessions are conducive to the building of hostility and resentment on the part of teachers. When he is in desperate need of assistance, the most dedicated teacher becomes disenchanted when confronted by courses which have tenuous or no connections with the real problems he faces in the classroom.

College courses can still be an effective and viable means of inservice education. It is the design and implementation of college courses which need modification. Instead of a "prepackaged" block, the course should be designed with attention to unique characteristics of schools/systems. Should the school be concerned with moving to a highly individualized instructional program, a college course should be composed of elements which would support and guide the particular faculty as they move into this complex curricular change.

Flexibility must mark the entire process of course design and implementation in the area of inservice education. Although the total number of hours may be regulated by university requirements, the course should be planned cooperatively with the target personnel. They can decide the number of class sessions to be held and the number of hours per session. It is vital that they make the decision with respect to site of the classes. No longer must college classes be held on the college campus; instead, they can and should be held in the schools where the problems exist and must be faced.

Nor should any course be the sole prerogative of one professor. The thinking and work of several professors constitute a strength when complex problems are faced. The value of the knowledge and experience of public school personnel must not be ignored. Their involvement as teaching assistants can be a potent factor in the success of the inservice college course. In terms of classroom significance, the most effective field courses are those which involve a number of teachers from a particular school's faculty. In such cases, these teachers can serve as a catalytic nucleus for change in their school.

Inservice education today requires a primary emphasis on the close cooperation of the educators of public school systems and institutions of higher education.

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